

## **“WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES”**

Talk by Robin Oake, Vice President CPA, at official launch ceremony of West Mercia CPA

Thurs 13th January 2011, West Mercia Police HQ, Hindlip

### **“WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES”**

Read Joshua 1. 1-9

When I joined CPA, I was a 20 year old at Police Training School and went to the then HQ in Dennison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London to the London Branch Meeting ... when there were only 3 other



Branches ... Glasgow, Northern Ireland & I think Manchester with members scattered through the land with little connection except through the Magazine and one of those members I later met was Ramsey Maule from Shrewsbury. It was the International Christian Police Association then. As I walked into that room on my first visit, I was surrounded by men ... no women as I remember ... all of whom looked as if they had been in the Job for 30 years and more; indeed, some had fought in World War 2 as well! I was somewhat shy having only been at Training School for 3 weeks .. everyone looked as old as Methuselah.

Here I am today when I am Methuselah! I once said that when police officers walking the beat look young, I was on the way out. Now I look at Chief Constables & Chief Superintendents who are far too young to be in such a senior rank – whatever age does that make me?

However, I congratulate you as members of CPA that the West Mercia Branch is now officially founded. I know that a lot of work has gone on in preparation

for this evening; this is the culmination and now you are not fragmented members but one single entity.. a Branch.. May our God encourage you all, direct your ways and may you be responsive to His leading.

Then it is as well to remind you that you will be the subject of many conversations amongst colleagues; you will be watched, you will be laughed at occasionally and you will stand together to be counted. When I joined up, I was encouraged the night before to 'nail my colours to the mast'; make your stand as a Christian and that was done by one of my new colleagues who, when he saw my feet in his cubicle as I knelt by my bed, rushed into me and said quite loudly, "What the hell do you think you're doing?" He broadcast this next day!

I believe there are lessons to be learned in all situations from Scripture and one of the most apt is found in our reading tonight. It is amazing that a policeman's lot is similar to that of Joshua! Joshua had been given the immense privilege and responsibility of leading the Israelites into their promised land. Without God's instructions, Joshua would have failed in his job. The first step was to "be strong and courageous" [6]. Next, he was to "continually meditate on the Book of the Law" [8a] and finally, he was "to do everything it said" [8b]. As the meercats say, "Simple, dot com."

CPA is not a Trade Union or a rival to the Police Federation; a CPA Branch doesn't have rights nor does it seek privileges or special treatment; the Branch and its members seek to serve police officers and the public with the highest integrity.

As long as Joshua followed the directions, God promised him success. Police officers act under the law, have to take instruction and initiatives, often have to be courageous and always wise in decision-making and in debate.

This recipe for success can be ours too because that success was little to do with money, popularity or even good health. INDEED WHEN I JOINED THE Metropolitan Police, Chief Superintendent Jim Millar, Commandant of the Training School, welcomed we new recruits and amongst other things he said, this stuck in my mind; “You will never be rich and rarely popular but don’t lose your sense of humour!” Oh no, it was quite a different meaning for Joshua.

You see, in the original Hebrew, where our English translates this to say “*you will be prosperous and successful*” it actually means, “*you will act wisely.*” And just as Joshua, with his instructions, was called to be wise, the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus is, I believe saying to you as a Branch, indeed to us all in CPA, “*be very careful how you live ... not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*” *Ephesians 5.15.*

*So what was the REAL source of Joshua’s successful foray into the Promised Land? This is what God said to him, “AS I WAS WITH MOSES, SO I WILL BE WITH YOU. I will NEVER leave you or forsake you.” [5].*

*This promise is continued today and every day. So many times in Scripture does God promise His permanent presence. As Christians, we are never without Him, never alone. There will be times as individuals, and even as a Branch of CPA, when we will feel that things are not going our way; that there’s too much to do; that we are not appreciated. God will whisper in our*

heart, "I am here; I am with you." The only time we will forget this and not recognize His closeness, is when we sin; that becomes the barrier and just as Jesus, on the cross, bearing our sin and the sin of the world, yelled while dying, "My God, why have You forsaken me?" it

**So through the life of Joshua let us see what God can do!!**

Knowing that our God will never leave us or forsake us,

[A policeman's lot is to.....](#)

**BE STRONG & COURAGEOUS**

As Christian police officers, we are not primarily called to be preachers, it is not our first duty to keep speaking to colleagues and the public about our God; our calling is to be good police officers, in whatever rank we find ourselves. A good police officer is respected by colleagues and senior officers; a good police officer is judged by his or her attitude, determination, patience, industriousness and above all, integrity.

There are times when a police officer has to be strong-willed; has to stand his or her ground; the strength needed is not to get one's own way be strong to see what is right and see it through.

There are obvious times when an officer has to be courageous; the days in which we presently live and police are often dangerous; bravery is a very real attribute for active policing and also with other ranks in another sense in standing up for what is right on police policy, police aims and objectives; in these austere time, brave with the budget problems. Yes be strong and very courageous.

The Christian police officer has that extra responsibility – to serve God as well as man. That does not necessarily make us better police officers than our non-Christian colleagues but it should – indeed, it must – make us better officers than we would otherwise be as non Christian men and women. And then, to stand up for what is right and live out the commitment of a Christian on and off duty, does [take courage](#) and [an inner strength](#) not to compromise one's faith. If we a Christians stand out from the crowd it should not be for the things we don't do or say but it should only be because of our ability, how we do the job given to us and that we can be wholly trusted.

You remember that Joshua's next instruction was to be careful to obey the Law. In his day, it was to follow the 10 Commandments and the other 200 or so laws which emanated from that Tablet all of which had primarily to do with commitment and integrity.

[So for the Policeman's Lot... .. \*we have to OBEY the Law\*](#)

This may seem an obvious conclusion but let's think it through. We all know that some law with which we have to do is not good law, is sometimes very pedantic and almost shackles good policing. The public sometimes expect more of us than the law allows. However, skirting round legal obligations, or worse, ignoring what the law states, is not the way to go forward. There are legitimate means of bringing anomalies to light within the Police Service. That is a road down which I don't want to go. Police officers are not above the law ... in their driving on and off duty; in their drinking in off-duty hours; with their families as far as treating wife and children are concerned. I only mention

three areas where, as Chief Constable, I have to deal with discipline case involving those issues.

Then thirdly, Joshua was instructed not only to obey the Law but also **to meditate on the Law day and night.**

*This again is the Policeman's lot . Even with poor shift duties and long, sometimes awkward hours, that should be too difficult and even it seems impossible, it is essential that we make time.*

The step I want to take is one further than that of the secular law. For the Christian police officer, we have an even higher standard to attain which directly aligns us with Joshua AND, IN FACT, TAKES US FURTHER.! We need to be alert at all times to God's law as found in the canon of Scripture and to do that, it is essential to spend time reading it and to attend what I call lively churches, of whatever denomination, to absorb the teaching and then the outworking of what we learn. At home, we surely need to spend a specific time reading our bibles, and I recommend using bible-reading notes to help and also, to pray much and to prepare ourselves each day for duty. There's nothing strange about this but for any Christian it is an essential part of our armour against compromise or deviating from the right and proper way.

You now have a new Branch here in West Mercia; you have a vast area to police and while I commend meeting together as often as possible, I know that that will be immensely difficult. But meet when you can, even in small groups and have a local News Sheet to keep your selves in touch to encourage one another.

Be careful to obey the Law so that you, in the words to Joshua, may be careful to do everything in it! Tall order but with God, nothing is impossible. Witnessing is not just what a Christian says or doesn't say; witnessing is just being what a Christian is. Q.E.D. Think about it! Or as the Christian professional golfer Payne Stewart & his church began with their bracelets WWJD "What would Jesus do?"

As we read through the book of Joshua, certain things stand out and are pertinent to us today:

God commended him and rewarded those who Joshua was leading because .....

- (i) he followed the Lord wholeheartedly (14. 9 & 14)
- (ii) he never acted unfaithfully towards the Lord (22.31)
- (iii) because of his integrity, his followers, his friends also dedicated themselves to serve the Lord God ( 24.18 & 24)

I love to read those encouragements because Joshua recorded them and made that record on a large stone planting it beneath an OAK tree (24.26.)

Perhaps it is too early for an epitaph for a Branch which is only just beginning but would it be good if a daily summing up of those who keep watch on us ... as surely they will ... that firstly, they recognize our integrity and ability to perform our duties to the highest quality and secondly, that some of our

colleagues of whatever rank, may themselves see the worth of having faith in the Lord Jesus and thereby walk in newness of life.

After all, He, more than Joshua, **is the One we should be seeking to follow.**

May He be your influence in your new Branch; and remember that great motto of the Royal Military Academy and so often propounded by Sir Peter de la Billiere ... **“ONLY THOSE WHO SERVE ARE QUALIFIED TO LEAD”**

Choose you - this day - who you will serve .... (Joshua 24. 15)

Now to Him Who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in and through the Christian Police Association and this Branch, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to honour Him, to be true servants in our profession and to be – whatever our rank or position in West Mercia – those people You want us to be. In the higher service of the Master, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.